

Shattered Dreams Part 6

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SHATTERED DREAMS

PART 6

Amanda was released from the hospital much sooner than Jamie, as was expected. In the beginning, Lee spent as much time as he could with her, when he wasn't working. They visited Jaime together and sometimes Lee would go alone. During this time, the tension between Amanda and her mother grew. They barely spoke when they happened to be in the same room, and the home that used to be filled with love had taken on a dismal atmosphere. It got so bad, Lee dreaded going to the house.

At first Lee was quick to put the blame on Dottie for being so unyielding and unable to forgive. Especially since she couldn't even bring herself to look at him ever since that fateful day when all secrets were revealed. As time wore on, however, he realized that Amanda was being just as stubborn, if not more so.

He also noticed an unsettling change in her behavior toward everyone in general. She seemed to no longer have the quiet patience for Philip that she once had. She would snap at him for things she used to let slip and tear into him for things she once was able to talk calmly and rationally about. Lee tried, on a few occasions, to get Amanda to open up to him, but the silence and distance between them increased with each day.

Lee had faith that, if he just gave Amanda enough time to get over everything that happened, she would return to the warm, loving person he knew her to be. Doubt crept in a few days before Jamie was to be

released from the hospital. Amanda had been out running errands and came home to find Philip wasn't home from school yet.

"Where's Philip?" Amanda asked Dottie in a cold tone.

"He called from school. He said he wanted to go over and see Jamie. He took the bus."

"And you just took it upon yourself to tell him it was O.K.? You should have told him to come straight home. I go over to the hospital every day. He could have come with me if he wanted to see his brother."

"Maybe he didn't want to go with you." Dottie knew she was crossing the line, but couldn't stop herself.

"What's that supposed to mean!?" Amanda asked, angrily.

"Well, you haven't been treating him very fairly lately, and I think..."

"Don't you dare judge me on the way I'm handling my son!" Amanda shouted. "Just look at the way you're treating your 'daughter'!"

"The way I'm treating you?" Dottie couldn't believe what she was hearing.

"I don't want to do this now, Mother! I'm going to the hospital. Maybe I'll get there in time to give Philip a ride home."

"Yes, you do that, Amanda!"

Amanda glared back at her mother before heading out the door. Shortly after she left, Philip sauntered through the back door.

"Hi Grandma." He greeted her with a kiss on the cheek. "Is Mom home?" He asked tentatively.

"Hi, Sweetheart. No she isn't. You just missed her."

"Oh." Philip looked downcast.

Dottie gave him a loving look. "Come on, Sweetheart. I know she's been pretty hard on you lately. Try to understand. She's going through some tough times right now. Give her some time. Things will get back to normal - you'll see."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," Philip said, with a half-hearted smile, then headed upstairs.

A couple hours later there was a knock on the front door. Dottie opened the door to find, to her surprise, Lee standing on the other side. He shifted nervously when he saw her and noticed her quickly avert her eyes from his.

"Amanda's not here," Dottie said, coldly, then added, "she's at the hospital."

"Oh. Well...I guess ...I, uh...should've called first." Lee

stammered.

Just as he started to leave, Dottie spoke again, a softer tone this time. "I suppose you could come in and wait for her. She's been gone a while. She'll probably be back any minute."

"Well, uh...I, uh..."

"Come on in, Lee," she said, opening the door wider.

For the first time in a while Dottie looked directly into his eyes. The gesture should have brought him relief, but, instead, it made him more uneasy. He decided that going there was definitely a mistake, but he was there now, and if they were going to have it out he might as well get it over with. He followed her to the kitchen where she offered him a seat and a cup of coffee. Dottie started with small talk and Lee began to relax. It wasn't long, though, before she had him nervously running his fingers through his hair.

"So, when are you planning to move in?"

"What?" He was taken by surprise.

"Well, you two are married aren't you. I mean, you don't plan on living apart forever do you?"

"I, uh..." he cleared his throat. "Look, Dottie, I don't want to talk about this now. I came here to talk to Amanda."

"No, no, of course. Why would you want to start talking to me now? You didn't feel the need to tell me my daughter was a spy. You didn't bother to tell me you married her, or that you got her preg..." she bit her tongue. "Lee, it's an honest question that deserves an honest answer."

Lee was growing agitated. "I just don't think now is the right time. There is just too much going on right now. I think we should wait until things settle down."

Dottie stood up angrily and began to pace the floor. "Oh, by all means! You wouldn't want to be living under the same roof when your lives are in such turmoil! I mean, this is a pretty rough time and you two shouldn't have to try and have a real marriage until things are much smoother! I can see where this marriage is headed!"

"Now, wait a minute..."

The slamming of the front door cut Lee off.

"Philip!" Amanda yelled as she entered the kitchen.

"Where is he!?" She demanded of her mother, not even acknowledging Lee.

"He's upstairs...why?" Dottie was ready to defend her grandson.

Amanda headed for the stairs and met Philip at the bottom. She grabbed his arms and shook him, her anger having complete control over her.

"What the hell is the matter with you?! How could you do that to Jamie?! Do you have any idea how upset he is?!"

Philip was struggling to get away from his mother. He was truly afraid of what she might do. He had never seen her like this. At the same time Lee and Dottie came running in from the kitchen.

"What are you talking about?" Philip said, fearfully. "I just went to see him. I didn't do anything."

"Didn't do anything?!" She continued to shake him.

"Let go of him!" Dottie pulled at Amanda's arm.

"Amanda, calm down!" Lee was pulling at the other one.

Amanda released Philip and turned on Lee. "You stay out of this. This has nothing to do with you!"

It was a slap in the face - to hear Joe's words coming from her mouth. He let go of her arm and took a step back, the feeling that he had just lost her for good gripping his heart.

"What did he do that was so terrible?" Dottie wanted to know.

Amanda looked back at Philip. "You had to tell him, didn't you? You had to tell him about me and Lee and the baby..."

"I just thought he should know."

"It wasn't your place to tell him!" She shouted. "He is lying in a hospital and you tell him something you know damn well would upset him. How could you do that to your brother!?"

With a sudden surge of anger, Philip boldly stared his mother down. He spoke slowly and deliberately.

"How could I do that? I didn't lie to him. I didn't keep the truth about my job from him. I didn't keep my marriage from him. I didn't do anything to him...you did." He turned and slowly ascended the stairs, leaving Amanda staring after him.

"What are you doing here!" She spat at Lee, still needing to vent her anger.

"I really don't know anymore." He replied sadly, then left. His eyes filled with tears as he walked out the front door.

"You need some serious help." Dottie told her daughter before she joined Philip upstairs, leaving Amanda alone.

Joe helped Amanda get Jamie settled when he came home, but declined when Dottie asked him to stay for dinner. He found it hard to be around Amanda, as it seemed a lot of friction had developed between them as well. The next evening Lee reluctantly went to the house to talk to Amanda.

Philip answered the door and Lee followed him to the den where the rest of the family sat. For the first time since he learned the

truth, Jamie looked at Lee and, realizing he was his stepfather, he felt a little uncomfortable. The look of discomfort did not go unnoticed by Lee. 'He must really hate me,' he thought as he turned away from Jamie's gaze. 'He must really hate me,' Jamie thought when he saw that Lee couldn't even look at him.

Amanda took the dessert dishes into the kitchen and Lee followed.

"I need to talk to you."

"Lee, Jamie just came home yesterday. I don't want to get into a heavy discussion right now."

"This has nothing to do with us. Billy keeps bugging me about when you're coming back."

Amanda thought that she would be ready to go back to work once Jamie was home, but she had started having second thoughts.

"I don't know that I'll be going back," she said matter-of-factly as she walked back into the den.

Lee followed. "What are you talking about? Jamie's fine. You told me yourself the doctor said he could go back to school in a week."

The room became hushed and all eyes were on Amanda and Lee.

"I've been shirking my duties as a mother long enough. I want to be here when the boys need me - not half-way across the world."

"You think your being home instead of at the agency would have changed anything? Jamie would have still been riding his bike. The car still would have hit him. Things happen that you don't have control over Amanda. That's life."

"The boys need me."

"You mean Jamie needs you." He was getting agitated.

"Yes!" She snapped back.

"Amanda, I know you almost lost him. I realize what you have been through, but coddling him is not going to change what happened. It's only going to turn him against you - and you've already alienated one son."

Dottie and the boys saw the flash of anger in Amanda's eyes with the last statement. Jamie couldn't help but think that Lee had a point. He really hated when his mother treated him like a baby.

"So you're going to tell me how to raise my children now!? You don't have the slightest idea of how to be a parent!"

"That's right! That chance was taken away from me!" Lee unleashed his own anger.

"I guess Jamie was right," Amanda's voice grew quiet. "He was worried that you might resent him because of the baby. I suppose you resent me too."

"What!? Have you completely lost your mind!? Lee couldn't believe what she was saying.

"Maybe...but I don't hear you denying it."

"That's it! I've had it!" Lee lost all control. "I have done everything I could possibly do to help you through this! I stood by you, even when you were pushing me away, but I can't take any more of your verbal abuse!"

"Nothing's keeping you here...it's not like you live here!"

"You want me to leave, is that it! You want to end this marriage now!"

"Lee, just go home," she said, exasperated.

Lee started to leave then turned to face her again. All his pain and anger caused him to lash out at her. To make her hurt the way he was hurting.

"It's so easy for you, isn't it? Sure, you've got one failed marriage under your belt, what's one more." He knew he struck a nerve.

"Get out," Amanda's jaw was clenched. "Get out, now - and don't ever come back."

"Fine. Have it your way...you always do."

With that Lee stormed out of the room and left the house, slamming the door behind him.

TO BE CONTINUED

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file.